

## Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL, BY

SUBJECT: ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMS IN BURUNDI

REF: DEPARTMENT AIRGRAM 155

1. STUDY OF ENGLISH IS STANDARD AT VIRTUALLY ALL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BURUNDI, AND THIS PRESENTLY INVOLVES ABOUT 12,000 TO 14,000 STUDENTS, BUT LEVEL OF INSTRUCTION AND ACHIEVEMENT IS QUITE LOW. BURUNDI GOVERNMENT WITH HELP OF FOREIGN ADVISORS IS NOW TRYING TO REVAMP CURRICULUM AND TEACHING MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH, BUT PROGRESS IS SLOW, AND QUALIFIED SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ARE IN VERY SHORT SUPPLY. USG PARTICIPATION TAKES PLACE ONLY AT UNIVESITY LEVEL, WHERE TWO FULBRIGHT PROFESSORS GIVE COURSES IN SEVERAL FACULTIES, AS WELL AS INSTRUCT FUTURE SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHERS NOW STUDYING AT TEACHERS COLLEGE. AT UNIVERSITY LEVEL, ONE BELGIAN, ONE EGYPTIAN, AND ONE BURUNDIAN PROFESSOR COMPLETE THE ENGLISH STAFF OF FIVE.

2. ALTHOUGH BURUNDI IS FIRMLY FRANCOPHONE, IT LIVES WITHIN THE ECONOMIC ORBIT OF ANGLOPHONE EAST AFRICA. THERE IS THUS A GENUINE NEED FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS AMONG THE SMALL GROUP WHICH GRADUATES FROM SECONDARY AND HIGHER SCHOOLS. MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR BURUNDIAN CONTACT WITH ANGLOPHONE PARTS OF AFRICA AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD (WHERE ENGLISH IS SO WIDELY USED) MUST NOW BE FORGONE IN TECHNICAL, COMMERCIAL, UNCLASSIFIED

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AND CULTURAL FIELDS BECAUSE OF ENGLISH INSUFFICIENCY. TO REALIZE A SERIOUS CHANGE IN THE LEVEL OF ENGLISH KNOWLEDGE OF SECONDARY AND HIGHER SCHOOL GRADUATES IN FIVE YEARS, WE THINK IT WOULD TAKE ABOUT 30 TO 40 WELL-TRAINED NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND A DOUBLING OF THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL STAFF FROM FIVE TO TEN. A WHOLESALE RESUPPLY OF TEXT-BOOKS AND TEACHING MATERIALS WOULD ALSO BE NECESSARY, AS

THESE ARE NOW ABOUT 15 YEARS OLD AND LARGELY BASED ON OUT OF DATE BRITISH METHODOLOGY.

3. WE THINK THAT THE BURUNDI GOVERNMENT WOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO AN INFUSION OF USG FUNDS FOR NEW PEDAGOGICAL MATERIALS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND WOULD CERTAINLY ACCEPT ADDITIONAL FULBRIGHT PROFESSORS OF ENGLISH AT THE UNIVERSITY. THE QUESTION IS RATHER WHETHER THE THE USG WOULD ASSIGN A HIGH ENOUGH PRIORITY TO BURUNDI TO JUSTIFY THE EXPENDITURES FOR SUCH RESOURCE INPUTS. WITHOUT SUCH HELP, THE SITUATION WILL IMPROVE ONLY marginally, I.E., THERE WILL BE ONLY SMALL AND INSUFFICIENT ANNUAL INCREMENTS TO THE ENGLISH TEACHING CORPS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS (FROM AMON THE FEW GRADUATES OF THE TEACHERS COLLEGE SPECIALIZING IN ENGLISH), AND THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT OF FINDING ENGLISH TEACHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL FROM AMONT THE VERY FEW BURUNDIAN STUDENTS AT ANGLO-PHONE UNIVERSITIES. IN ADDITION, THE BURUNDI GOVERNMENT WILL NOT EASILY FIND FUNDS FOR THE NEW SECONDARY LEVEL TEXTBOOKS THAT ARE URGENTLY NEEDED.

4. FOR THE MOMENT, WE WOULD FAVOR MAINTENANCE OF A STATUS QUO POLICY ON USG INVOLVEMENT IN ENGLISH PROGRAMS UNTIL WE SEE HOW CURRENT PLANS PROCEED FOR REVAMPING THE SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH CURRICULUM. IF THE RESULTING PLAN LOOKS PROMISING, WE MIGHT THEN WISH TO CONSIDER SOME SMALL AID FUNDING FOR MATERIALS, AND THE REVIVAL OF PAST OFFERS TO THE BURUNDI GOVERNMENT TO RECRUIT PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER ENGLISH TEACHERS IN BURUNDI. HOWEVER, ONE EARLY STEP THAT MIGHT BE TAKEN WOULD BE AN OFFER OF POST-GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS IN THE U.S. TO

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A FEW OF THE MOST PROMISING GRADUATES OF THE ENGLISH PROGRAM IN THE TEACHERS COLLEGE SO THAT THEY MIGHT RETURN CAPABLE OF GIVING UNIVERSITY LEVEL INSTRUCTIONS.

5. IT SHOULD BE MENTIONED THAT THE USIS CULTURAL CENTER CURRENTLY HAS AN "ENGLISH CLUB" FOR IMPROVING THE ENGLISH OF THOSE WHO ALREADY HAVE A FAIR KNOWLEDGE OF IT. IT IS ESSENTIALLY AN ADULT EDUCATION MEDIUM, WHICH HAS LITTLE TO DO WITH THE FOREGOING DISCUSSION, AND WHICH SHOULD BE CONTINUED MORE OR LESS ON PRESENT LINES.

MARK

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